

6 Forbesdale Close  
Gloucester NSW 2422

8<sup>th</sup> September 2013

Director Mining Projects  
Development Assessment Systems and Approval  
Department of Planning and Infrastructure  
GPO Box 39  
Sydney 2001

**RE: Proposed Rocky Hill Mine (SSD 5156); Gloucester Valley**

I write this letter to advise that I strongly object to the Rocky Hill open cut coal mine, at Gloucester NSW.

This letter is one of many that you will receive about the impact of mining (and to some extent CSG) in the Gloucester area.

We are sure that you will not receive many personal letters in support of these extractive industries. Supporting letters will probably talk about the increase of jobs in the area, or the past loss of the timber industry and/or the dairy industry. As evidenced by many small mining towns throughout Australia, the promise of "jobs for our children, jobs for our town" is often freely mouthed by politicians and extractive industry bosses alike.

In January 2013 the website ***MiningAustralia.com.au*** quoted the general manager of the Stratford/Yancoal coalmine, Mike Smith, as saying that 58% of his existing workforce resides within the Gloucester and Great Lakes Local Government Areas.

This means that 42% of his employees travel from much further afield, presumably as DDOs (drive in/drive out), putting their lives, as well as those of other road users, at great risk due to the excessive work hours 'enjoyed' by many mine workers. Even those who commute from the nearby Great Lakes area have a drive of an hour or more each way.

It can be readily concluded from Mr. Smith's comments that he has not been able to attract any more potentially employable people from the Gloucester local government area for his current mine.

As per an article in the Gloucester Advocate of 4<sup>th</sup> September 2013, Yancoal has now axed 60 permanent positions at its Stratford and Duralie mines; that is 20% of its workforce.

Whilst the Rocky Hill project may create jobs in the Gloucester area, this doesn't mean these jobs will be filled by current Gloucester residents. They are likely to attract more out-of-town DDO workers who won't be spending any of their pay packets in Gloucester; they will spend their money in their distant home towns.

The figures contained in the (September 2013) EIS for the Rocky Hill mines confirms that the vast majority of proposed employees will not come from Gloucester, nor will they spend the pay packets in Gloucester.

However, the letters that you receive pleading for the Rocky Hill mine not to go ahead will tell many a sad story. They will tell of lost enjoyment; lost investments, in terms of a legacy for their children; loss of a planned investment for retirement; loss of friends who have already given up and moved on. It is not only the new arrivals in Gloucester who will suffer; there are also many families who have lived in the area for many years before the Rocky Hill project existed, who will also suffer, and are in fact suffering as you read this letter. Those letters are real stories about real people.

One letter that you may receive will be from an elderly couple, whose home will look straight onto coal conveyors and coal-loading facilities. They will probably not tell you of their earlier lives, one as a child under the Nazi jackboots between 1938 and 1945, and the other as a young man fighting the iron fist of the Russians when they invaded Hungary in 1956. Australia has been kind to them until now, yet again they are dreading the jackboots of overseas profit-makers and an uncaring state government.

These letters should be read by you, as employees of the NSW government, against a backdrop of big money and big profits, some of which will flow to the NSW government. But much of which will flow to overseas-owned corporations, private and government. Take a look at Google maps of the NSW area of Singleton and see for yourself the visual obscenity of open-cut mining. That is what the Gloucester Valley will face should Rocky Hill be approved. That is what the Gloucester Valley will endure forever once the mining stops in 20 or so year's time. The effect of cumulative mining in the valley will leave a permanent, irreversible scar in and on the valley.

Oh, and yes, the proponents. In its Rocky Hill Community Newsletter of September 2013, it is stated very clearly that there will be "*No final 'void' or hole left at the end of the project*". Just another lie that they expect us, and you, to accept without question. If they extract up to 25 million tonnes of raw coal from the ground, how can there be no "void". Even when they return the visibility barrier's contents to the open cut holes, there will still be a 25 million tonne hole.

Gloucester's aerodrome will disappear under the proposed Rocky Hill (Stage 2), as will the adjacent 500 head dairy milking herd currently owned by the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Gloucester family of the Maslen's.

Loss of Gloucester's aerodrome will also mean the end of its role as an emergency airfield for bushfire-fighting; it was used for 3 full weeks late in 2012 for RFS and NPWS use in several local S.44 fire emergencies. It is often used for aircraft familiarisation by the RFS and NPWS.

"Visual Amenity" is a term that describes a measure of the visual quality of a site or area experienced by residents, workers or visitors. It is the collective impact of the visual components which make a site or an area pleasant to be in.

Visual Amenity, to us as residents of Gloucester, is the very enjoyment of watching dare-devil pilots at the Gloucester aerodrome, as well as experiencing the sheer screams of pleasure as first-time tandem parachutists descend to the aerodrome from their first-ever parachute jump. Visual Amenity is hearing the sound of lawn-mowers in the sky as near-invisible motorised hang-gliders appear from the east over the Mograni foothills. Visual Amenity is also the pleasure of watching our local eagles soaring alongside the silent gliders during their meetings at the aerodrome.

Visual Amenity is watching the afternoon line up of the Maslen's 500 milkers as they patiently wait to enter the fully automated dairy. Another Amenity, this time of the nasal variety, is the smell of those 500 milkers as an easterly wind carries their signature smell to our house. It is obviously not the best smell, but Gloucester is rural, it is farming. It must never become industrialised with mines and csg.

Visual amenity to the Rocky Hill proponents is noted in the September 2013 Newsletter as "Once the [western and northern] visibility barrier is complete, there would be no significant visibility of the mining operations". More spin, more lies or half-lies. They seem to think that huge walls of overburden soil and rock, devoid of any plant life for many a year, is a better thing to look at than a growing hole in the ground. Oh yes, they did not mention the dust that will blow off those sterile mountains of overburden. Nothing more than one eyesore hiding another.

The visibility barriers might hide the coal pits. The mine proponents clearly fail to admit that the barriers won't hide the dust, explosive and diesel fumes that will emanate from the pits for the life of the mine.

And yes, their "wildlife corridors". They are planting screening areas along all their property boundaries. They are only a few metres wide. Wildlife corridors; will they put signs in telling the wildlife about their new corridors, and how to use them. Again, nothing more than more spin, weeds and dying saplings.

You city-centric folk in Sydney would not know of Gloucester's annual fundraiser to help keep the Newcastle-based Westpac rescue helicopter rescue service in the air. The next ambulance that you will probably have to call will be at your door in minutes. At times, the same usually applies in Gloucester. The huge difference is that Gloucester hospital is not a well-resourced hospital able to deal with all types of emergencies. The next 'big' hospitals are at Taree (50k; 1 hour) via Bucketts Way East or Newcastle (120k; 1.5 hrs) via Bucketts Way South. Often, the Westpac helicopter is summoned for an emergency, life-saving flight. How will Gloucester's future Westpac fundraisers be held once the aerodrome is swallowed by Rocky Hell (Stage 2)?

The item below was in a 2012 edition of the Gloucester Advocate newspaper.

*"A fundraiser by the Gloucester Westpac Rescue Helicopter Support Group, as part of the Gloucester Aero Club fly-in on the weekend, raised more than \$5000 for the Helicopter Rescue Service. There were about 20 Gloucester businesses and organisations as well as personal donations of time and money for the weekend and all have been thanked personally from the Rescue Service".*

Sure, you might think that the Rocky Hell mine might kick in a few grand to the helicopter fund to make up what will certainly be lost should their mine go ahead. After all, it would be in their interest to do so, so you may think. But what about Gloucester's residents, its local businesses and the Aero Club and its members. Surely they will suffer a loss of doing, of

helping. Of giving. After all, that's what small communities do best. They band together to get things their city cousins so often take for granted.

As you read this letter, and those of many others, read them with a full understanding and appreciation of every word in every letter. Read between the lines, and accept that letters may not perhaps be as strong as they should be. The people who wrote them are stressed more than you can ever realise. And they are probably presuming that you are "doing the right thing."

Do not presume; do not be 'guided' by your colleagues or supervisors, nor your head of department, and certainly not by your Minister. Many of the letters you will read are by people who are retired, and who moved to Gloucester to escape the city. They have invested their all in Gloucester. In financial terms, my wife and I have no real alternative strategy open to us should Rocky Hell go ahead. **Should the mine be approved, there needs to be a condition in the approval process that the mine owners buy our property and those of other affected residents, so that we can resume our lives that are currently on hold.**

We have no lifeboat, we have no nest egg. We have a property that will in all certainty be worth far, far less than what we spent on it. We invested our life savings in our 5 acre block of land and built a house, erected a shed and put a lot of time and physical effort in landscaping. It took us about 4 years of pre-retirement planning to finally decide on Gloucester as a place to retire to. Why should an American tycoon and a handful of his associates be allowed to dictate our lives from so afar.

You are reading this and other letters in relation to the Rocky Hill mine. You should be aware that this is for Stage 1 only; Stage 2 is waiting in the wings as "Forbesdale Stage 2 – Exploration Program – EL 6523." (February 2011). As sure as night follows day, Stages 3, 4, etc. will probably appear quite soon after Stage 2 is approved, and they will sooner than later be right on Gloucester's CBD doorstep. Perhaps with a mine boundary only half a kilometre from the Gloucester CBD, its primary schools, hospital, child care centres, and nursing homes. And I haven't raised the health issues of 2.5 ppm and 10 ppm with you.

Read carefully, consider wisely and decide conscionably. There must be enough existing or proposed mines in NSW that are not on the doorstep of a country town. The Gloucester valley already has its share of coal mines; far more than Sydney. We want no more.

Spend a weekend in Gloucester and check out the closeness of the proposed mine to Forbesdale, where we live. Follow the easterly part of the GRL Rocky Hell exploration lease as it spreads north, just east of the Gloucester CBD and immediately south of the railway station.

We, and many others, are utterly and completely in your hands.

Sincerely, and from the heart

Bruce Gilbert  
Forbesdale, Gloucester, NSW